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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

26 July 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: [redacted] A/NIO/USSR-EE 25X1

FROM: [redacted] A/NIO/EA 25X1

SUBJECT: NIE 11-4-82: The Soviet Challenge to US Security Interests

1. President Reagan has announced that the Soviets are getting weaker, but this paper sounds as if they are triumphantly marching everywhere. If you think the President is wrong, say so, but don't ignore the respectable body of opinion which views the Soviet Union as a gerontocracy presiding over a failing economic system via an incompetent bureaucracy.

2. From an East Asian perspective, the remarkable thing is how the Soviet military build-up has failed to increase Soviet power or leverage in the area. The Soviets, as ourselves, have not discovered how to convert military hardware inventories into real influence on other countries' policies. Moscow cannot frighten Beijing into anything, Tokyo resists all Soviet blandishments, Pyongyang prefers the Chinese, even the National Peoples Army Marxist guerrillas in the Philippines stay away from the Russians.

3. The only "friend" the Russians have in the region is Vietnam and that relationship is characterized by truculence and minimal cooperation. Wherever in the developing world they have invested heavily in the past -- China, North Korea, Indonesia, Egypt, Somalia -- they have lost. Cuba is almost as much of a drain on them as Afghanistan, and this self-limits Moscow's appetite for wading further into Vietnam.

4. The East Asian section minimizes the above history of failure and present incompetence of Soviet regional activities, and ignores the very respectable attitudes and capabilities of the regional countries to stand against the Russians, with implicit or explicit American support. Certainly treatment of Chinese, Japanese and ANZUS are required minimal additions in this context.

5. In East Asia, as elsewhere in the world, the US does not stand alone against the Russians and this should be brought out. The past and

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present record of the Soviets in East Asia is not one of accomplishment. I therefore do not agree with leaving the reader to expect this in the future.

6. A final general comment. If the Russians conceive of their relationship as "fundamentally adversarial...based on ideological antagonism" we should say so. At the same time we must avoid the trap of mirror-imaging obscurantic talk of fundamental antagonisms which permanently prevent resolution of differences between ourselves and the Russians. I don't believe that this kind of rhetorical defeatism belongs in intelligence or policy documents, e.g., page xiii.

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cc: C/NIC
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